HERE AND NOW

I had a friend in the United States, Gary Starbuck who told me of an incident in his life. After about seven years of marriage, his wife suddenly disappeared from his life, leaving him with a three year old daughter, with an astonishing natural insight, to look after and bring up. One evening after having given the child her bath and supper, he put her to bed, and quietly sat beside her. The child, keenly sensitive to the mood of her parent, asked him if he were sad. When he said "yes", she asked if it was because of her mother. When Gary again said "yes", she told the father, "Daddy, if you don't think of mummy, you won't feel sad". And then, she turned and fell asleep.

Reason and intellect are obviously important tools not only for survival, but for creating flying machines on the one hand and beautiful figures of speech on the other. And yet, even the greatest scientists would admit that it is not the rational mind that comes up with the greatest discoveries, but something else : "Something somewhere doing we know not what". Albert Einstein was humble enough to confess that the equation ($E=MC^2$)came to him "from outside".

The fact of the matter is that our rational mind is deeply conditioned - psychologically and culturally - and what is labelled as "reasoning" is often just the mind making excuses for its reactive behaviour and emotional needs. As someone puts it : "many complain of their looks, but none about their brains, "Reason may be humanity's greatest boon, but it is also our greatest curse perhaps even our fatal flaw. What has happened is that what we have gained from reason through mastery over the world has been lost because of our separation from the world, a separation that is the prime cause of the bondage and misery of the human being.

Having separated ourselves from the world, we cannot accept that the meaning of life is simply that it stops : to accept that life is nothing more than the moments between birth and death seems absurd! That the whole existence has only one significance, for the human being to be happy beyond the confines of pleasure and pain, was just not acceptable; and our whole existence, our suffering must surely have greater significance. And if the universe will not tell us what it is, well then, we must make something up : thus enter the multitude of gods and religions. No wonder Joseph Campbell was incited into saying : "I don't believe life has a purpose. Life is a lot of protoplasm with an urge to reproduce and continue in being."

There is a saying that God made man because he loves stories - shades of Maya and Lila. Here is a good one. Once upon a time, in fact only a few hundred years ago most westerners believed that the humans lived on a planet that was located at the very centre of the universe. Then a great scientist named Galileo figured out that the earth circles the sun, and therefore, it must be the sun that is the centre. The Catholic Church, believing that humans had been specially created and that, therefore, the earth had to be the centre of the universe, forced Galileo to recant. This took place in 1630 but the church did not forgive Galileo until 1979! By then, of course, astronomers and physicists had discovered that the sun itself is a relatively small star located on the edge of relatively small galaxy, in a cosmos that includes millions of galaxies filled with uncountable billions of stars.

This crazy story has yet another twist : astronomers have recently found that the big bang sent everything in the universe moving away from everything else. Every single point in the universe can be considered the centre. To add to this melodrama comes the final twist in the story : Since Albert Einstein's discovery of space-time, it is impossible to locate ourselves in space unless we simultaneously locate ourselves in time.

Therefore, surely, the only way to locate oneself is :HERE and NOW.

Ramesh S. Balsekar
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